

## **Thoughts About the Reuse of the Blanchard School**

Short of a near-reconstruction like that performed on the Savers Bank downtown, I doubt that the Blanchard building can be refurbished to make it appropriate education space for young children without spending an exorbitant amount of money.

I believe the best reuse of the building, which is a treasured community asset, will be as a multi-function conference and community center. I feel that we should pursue renovations that would allow us to move the school department administrative offices from the current rental space to Blanchard in order to save on the rental costs. Additionally, I believe the Public Access television studio should be housed in Blanchard, which will free up space in Town Hall. My understanding, based on current space demands, is that the school department administrative offices and PEG studio would take up approximately one half of the available space.

Finally, I'd suggest any remaining space be converted to state-of-the-art meeting / conference facilities. Imagine what the many organizations in town could do with free access to newly remodeled meeting rooms, complete with audio-visual equipment, wireless internet access, PC's and video taping capabilities. The proximity of the PEG studio to the high-tech conference facilities would allow multiple concurrent meetings to be taped for air, would allow for live feeds to PEG or other cable access and could potentially be used for an adult continuing education program on video production.

However, I feel the most exciting aspect of this concept is the possibility of marketing the conference center to external businesses as a FOR FEE conference and training center. As the only state-of-the-art conference center between Worcester and Providence, The Blanchard Conference Center would essentially become not only self sustaining, but actually a money maker for the Town!

Furthermore, The Blanchard Conference Center would bring people to Uxbridge to spend money, and would inevitably generate residual business for caterers and other businesses that provide food and other products to conference attendees. Also, the host or hostess positions for any conferences at the Blanchard Conference Center could be tied to the Senior Work-Off program, allowing Senior Citizens in the community to provide a critical linkage to the building's history while earning a tax credit.

A multi-use conference and community center would be a wonderful public - private partnership that would save the Blanchard School, provide much needed meeting space for the many organizations in town, foster economic development, and restore a sense of pride in this cherished community asset!